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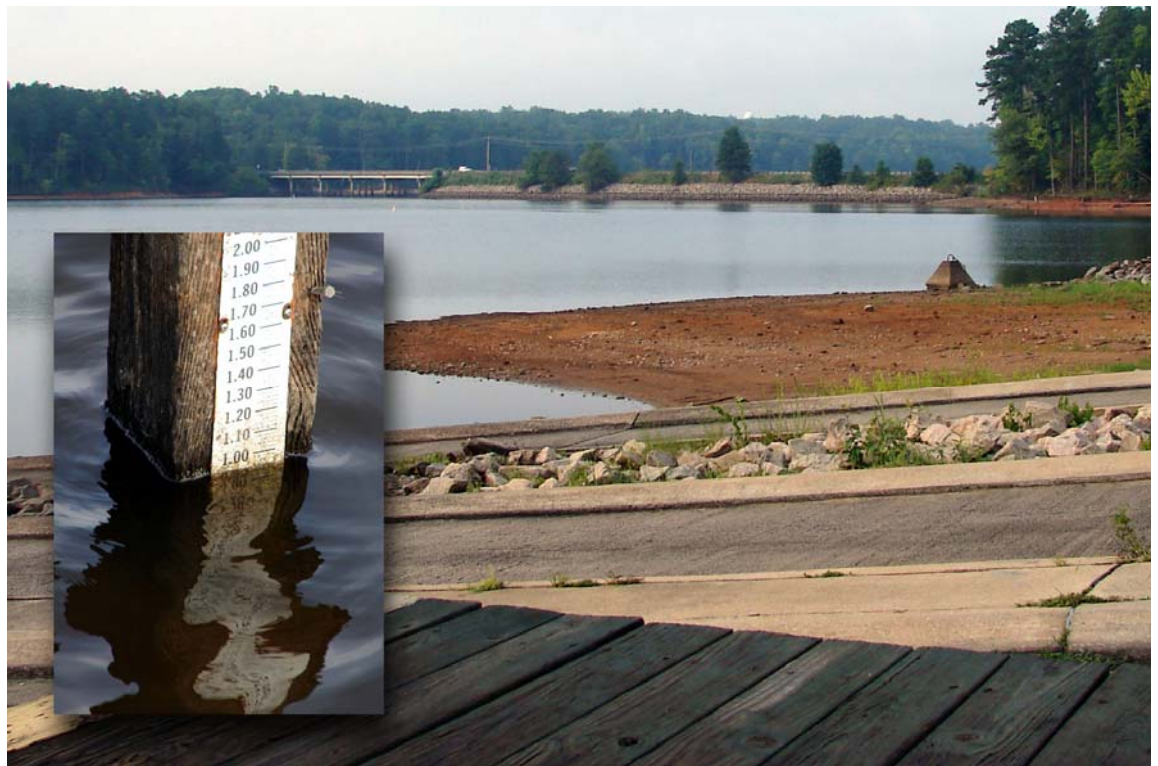
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WATER MANAGERS STRETCH RESOURCES AND PREPARE FOR A LONG AND DRY SPELL



How low can it go? The shoreline at Falls Lake keeps getting bigger as water levels continue to drop. (Photos by Terry Brown)

By Penny Schmitt

At recent meetings of the North Carolina Drought Council, state and federal officials worked with local governments to prepare for the possibility of a long term drought. With conditions already matching or exceeding droughts of record

that occurred in 1933, 1941, and 2002, forecasters were coping with the additional bad news that a La Nina cycle could result in a drier than normal winter. No guarantee of relief for long-term ground water conditions is in sight.

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UP FRONT

SUBVERSION & ESPIONAGE DIRECTED AGAINST THE U.S. ARMY (SAEDA) EXPLAINED

How many of us recall the old Spy vs. Spy comic from MAD magazine? Okay, the younger folks are off the



Greg Barr, SAW Chief of Security

hook on this one. The Spy vs. Spy comic pitted two spies against each other, one wearing all black and the other wearing all white. There was inevitably some trap or pitfall of dubious design that would ensnare one or the other of the two hapless spies until they were able to get free and wreak havoc on the other.

Modern day spies are not so obvious. They are crafty. They look like Joe the auto-mechanic, Jamie the teacher's assistant, or maybe the grocer from down the block. They have sophisticated ways of communicating. They

are highly skilled at what they do. They are trained to retrieve information from Uncle Sam's employees without the employees knowing that they have been had. It's our responsibility to not provide them with any information that may be useful to a foreign agency.

- Foreign/domestic agents target personnel who are "easy" prey. What are indicators of government personnel who may be "easy" prey?
 - Indebtedness, poor credit
 - Alcohol/Drug abuse
 - Adultery or lewd behavior
 - Immoral habits
- The above are but a few of the traits that may enable a foreign agent to blackmail or

extort information from an employee. It is a slippery slope that once started, it is hard to stop.

- The following names should ring a bell:
 - John Walker Lindh (Taliban) 20 year prison sentence.
 - John Arthur Walker (Soviet) plea bargain to reduce his son's sentence scheduled release 2017 at the age of 70.
 - Michael Walker (John's son) 25 year prison sentence. Reduced to 15 years, released in 2000. Supervised probation for

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Wilmington District



CPAC REOPENS ITS DOORS FOR IMPROVED BUT LIMITED CUSTOMER SERVICE

Long-time civil servants have traditionally viewed the personnel office as ‘the answer place’ where they could drop in for answers to any and all employment related questions. That’s probably why Wilmington District team members expressed their feelings about the “CPAC Hours” or the periodic “Closed for Lunch” signs placed on the door of the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC).

Are those folks in personnel really there to serve us? CPAC Chief Susan Dixon affirms that the answer is certainly yes.

“It’s just no longer possible for us to function like an ever-available help desk,” Dixon said. “That service continues to be very much available to every civilian employee through the Army Benefits Center, but it simply can’t always be available right down the hall at every moment.”

New personnel systems coming on line in the Department of Defense have added immensely to an already-large workload. “Information has to be correctly prepared against rigid, truly ‘drop dead’ suspenses,” she explained. “Making sure that people get paid, receive their ratings, and move through the NSPS without a hitch and have the right things so that they do not lose rights or benefits is vital. I found that in order to get through this critical workload, it was necessary to set aside a day to handle customer traffic in a different way while still accomplishing the critical work for the District.”

The Department of the Army and DoD have created a huge change in the way information is handled, and

the civilian work force has not yet become accustomed to the big culture change of managing most of their employment-related questions through websites or remote help lines.

The task of helping employees understand, adjust, access or change their personal benefits has been officially relegated to internet-based information systems, like the Army Benefits center (ABC), while, at Army, CPAC is viewed and staffed primarily as the element to assist supervisors in carrying out the major tasks involved in hiring, rating and managing employees.

Amid all the many changes the civilian workforce have been adjusting to over the past few years, learning to access, explore, and get answers through Army Knowledge Online (AKO), ABC and other ‘acronym’ web services may seem like just one thing too many to learn. Yet we really do have to learn these tasks ourselves with help from CPAC when we hit a rough spot.

“We know that it can be confusing and frustrating to deal with the internet-based information system,” Dixon said. “Although Army does not staff local CPACs to assist employees with those systems, the District has established some positions that can provide that support.”

Dixon encourages everyone to seek



CPAC staff members Christy Wicker (right), Ernest Carr & Jennifer Haggett are available on Wednesdays to help answer personnel questions.

answers through AKO and ABC first, and to come to CPAC if you run into a snag. “The ABC center at Fort Riley, Kansas, has an 800 number and a very helpful staff. It may not seem that it could possibly be as easy as calling me or the CPAC staff, but in almost every case the folks in Kansas know everything they need to know in order to help you out. We are certainly here for you if you are not getting sufficient information, you can’t complete an important action, or if you need detailed explanations of something. We just ask that you try going the ABC route first, and bring us the tougher problems to crack.”

Dixon said that recent hires in CPAC have somewhat alleviated the workload problem. “I now can set aside time each week when customers can meet with CPAC members to get answers to their questions about ABC or RESUMIX. We’ll be available every Wednesday afternoon from 1:00 to 2:00 in the multipurpose room to take up questions.” ■

DROUGHT CON'T

Again and again, meeting participants expressed hope for a long, soaking tropical depression to come and hover over North Carolina—provided it stayed short of the killer floods plaguing other parts of the nation, or damaging hurricane winds.

Jeff Orrock of the National Weather Service said that North Carolina needs to make up an overall deficit of 15 inches of rainfall over the next few months—“preferably not in a two day period of course!”

On Thursday, August 23rd, a number of new indicators and announcements emphasized the seriousness of the drought. The State Forestry Service imposed a statewide burning ban due to numerous fires whose persistence and severity was being worsened by high temperatures. Governor Mike Easley asked for federal assistance to farmers whose crops are withering in the dry heat. The state also asked citizens statewide to cut back on water use by 20 percent. And municipalities across North Carolina are stepping up conservation measures, including manda-

tory water use restrictions.

“Reservoirs are dropping by a foot about every ten days,” said State Drought Manager Woody Yonts. “It’s time for us all to work together.”

Fortunately for North Carolina, working together is a good habit that many communities and agencies have been building for several years.

Although all reservoirs are falling, Falls Lake on the Neuse River has extra attention from many stakeholders. As the main water supply for the City of Raleigh, and as the source of flows that augment the Neuse River for downstream communities, the long-range condition of the reservoir is of vital interest from Raleigh all the way to New Bern.

Accordingly, Neuse River Basin stakeholders set aside time for their own drought management meeting. As water manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wilmington District, Terry Brown has the lead in carrying out the flow regime from the lake.

“We have the responsibility of

making sure that we do our utmost to see flows remain adequate in the main stem of the river, and that water quality stays healthy despite high temperatures. City water intakes for communities like Goldsboro depend on good flows in the river, and as far downstream as the Weyerhaeuser lumber plant near New Bern, adequate water flow is a factor in preventing salt water intrusion at the plant,” Brown explained.

In normal conditions, flows from the dam at this time of the year would be at 260 cubic feet per second (cfs), dropping to about 184 cfs in November, as cooler temperatures and increased seasonal rainfall would be expected to improve natural conditions in the Neuse River.

Rather than continuing to draw down the water balance in Falls Lake at the usual summer rate, Brown proposed a gradual step down of flows between August 27th and the beginning of November, preserving more water in the reservoir, and very gradually shrinking the downstream flows.

DROUGHT CON'T

He suggested reducing flows to 230 cfs by September first, to 205 cfs by mid-September, and to 184 cfs on October first. At each stage, Brown expected to gather weekly data from the Division of Water Quality and downstream communities to make sure that they were able to accommodate the changes.

“It’s a balancing act,” Brown said. “We are aiming to stretch out our capacity in the reservoir for weeks longer, yet avoid negative impacts downstream from a sudden big change in flows.”

The consensus of stakeholders at the meeting was that this regime

could greatly alleviate concerns.

“It’s impressive how far this modest adjustment can extend water supply and maintain water quality,” said John Morris, Director of Water Resources for the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources. “It greatly reduces the risk of exhausting storage.”

The lowered releases would slow the drawdown of the lake so that the projected low would be reached in mid January 2008, as opposed to late November of 2007. “That takes us a lot closer to the turnaround in water supply we

usually see with winter rains by February,” Brown said.

Of course all hope for a significant rain sometime well before those dates. “We can change the flows again if Mother Nature gives us a break in the form of a major rainfall,” Brown said. “We have seen that happen before.” However, Brown and most climatologists agree that a big rain event may pull the reservoirs back up to ‘full’ but more frequent, steady rains will be needed to recharge ground water and move the region away from the ever present need to plan for the next dry spell. ■

SAEDA CON'T

the duration of the sentence.

- Robert Hannsen (Soviet) life in prison. Currently serves 23 hours a day solitary confinement in Florence, CO.
- Larry Wu-tai Chin (China) received a lengthy sentence. Found dead in his

prison cell. Garbage bag over his head. Suicide.

- Jonathon Pollard (Israeli) life sentence with recommendation for NO parole. Currently resides at Butner Federal prison here in North Carolina.

- These are just a few of the in-

famous characters in American spy history and the countries that “sponsored” them.

- Don’t be an easy target! None of the above individuals started out that way. It was a gradual process. ■

For more about SAEDA go to the following link ;

www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/ar381-12.pdf

FAR FROM HOME, CURRITUCK HELPS KEEP FISHING FLEETS IN NEW JERSEY AFLOAT

NOTE- *Reprinted with permission courtesy Asbury Park Press, a Gannett, Inc. newspaper.*

By MATT PAIS

MANAHAWKIN BUREAU

Every day, hundreds of boaters push through Barnegat Inlet, most giving no more than a cursory glance at an onboard depth finder as they cruise to or from port.

This safe passage is possible largely because of an ongoing effort by the Army Corps of Engineers to dredge and maintain one of the busiest and most profitable inlets in the country.

The work falls squarely on the shoulders of Capt. Ed Evans and his crew on the hopper dredge Currituck, a 150-foot, sand-pumping behemoth that works periodically throughout the year to maintain an ideal channel depth of 16 feet.

"This is one of the more important inlets we do," said Evans, who started dredging waterways with the corps in 1980 and has worked on projects from Maine to Florida.

Steering the hulking Currituck away from its dock at Viking Village and toward the inlet Tuesday, Evans and crew were about halfway through a 40-day stay, dredging in



Home ported in Wilmington, North Carolina the Currituck logs hundreds of miles each year traveling to dredging projects up and down the east coast. (File photo)

the shadow of the Ol' Barney lighthouse.

For 12 hours a day, seven days a week, Evans and his crew steer the hopper dredge and its two vacuum-like pumps across the 300-foot-wide federal channel. The Currituck can fill its 315-cubic-yard hold to capacity in less than 30 minutes.

Once on board, the fill is taken to designated unload zones between 100 and 200 yards from shore. With the press of a button, the boat's clam-like, hinged hold opens and drops a 390-ton payload on the

ocean floor.

"It's pretty simple, really. Just like a big dump truck," said Wildon Davis, the ship's second mate.

Evans and his crew of six, all seamen from Wilmington, N.C., operate the Currituck year-round. Other dredging projects include Manasquan Inlet, Cape Cod and the Outer Banks in their home state. But for more than two decades they have returned regularly to Barnegat Inlet.

"There's a lot of tax dollars spent here through the years, and you

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CURRITUCK CON'T

can't just walk away from that," Evans said.

This year, the federal budget included \$450,000 for the Currituck to operate and maintain the channel. That buys about a month of work, Evans said, but a proposed insertion in the 2008 federal budget could keep the dredge around for as long as eight months next year.

Just before Evans and crew finished their work at 6 p.m. Tuesday, the House of Representatives approved the 2008 Energy and Water Appropriations bill. In it is more than \$2 million for maintenance of the channel linking Barnegat Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

"Barnegat Inlet has a notorious reputation on the East Coast as being a very volatile inlet, and the depth of the channel is extremely important," said Jeff Sagnip, spokesman for Rep. Jim Saxton, R-N.J., who fought for the increased funding.

The final House appropriation dwarfs the \$54,000 included by President Bush's initial budget plans. Though the bill must still pass muster in the Senate, Sagnip said it is likely the corps will see increased funding next year.

Those who depend on safe passage through the inlet say the boost

is not only worthwhile, but necessary.

"Before they (the corps) started coming here, this inlet was a mess," said Pete Dolan, a captain who started running commercial fishing boats out of Viking Village more than 20 years ago.

"We lost boats and people died," he said.

The problem lies in the specific geography of the area that causes large sand shoals to gather quickly over time. The result is a constant "shallowing" of the water that makes passage for large ships dangerous, said Jim Gutowski, a longtime Barnegat Light captain.

"There's certain spots where the tide will flow and make these high spots that (the corps) needs to run down to make it safe for us," Gutowski said.

Dolan skips the scalloper Ms. Manyan, one of the biggest in Viking Village's 35-vessel fleet. He says the work performed by Evans and crew is invaluable.

"I draw 10 feet of water and I never have to worry. I just show up and go to work," he said.

Keeping fishermen safe is undoubtedly a motivating factor for continued dredging, but the eco-

nomic factors surrounding Viking Village and the surrounding marinas cannot be discounted. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency, Viking Village alone accounted for \$25.5 million in 2006.

That impact jumps by a factor of four when the journey from hook to dinner table is fully examined, says Gary DiDomenico, executive director of the Garden State Seafood Association.

"Someone has to buy it wholesale, then retail or at a restaurant. That's a lot of jobs and money," DiDomenico said. "That port is a major, major operation."

VIKING VILLAGE

With a fleet of 35 commercial boats catching scallops, monkfish, tuna, bluefish and swordfish, the Barnegat Light port ranks as the 32nd busiest U.S. fishing landing in terms of dollars of catch. Last year, 4.5 million pounds of seafood were hauled from the Atlantic to its docks on 18th Street.

It is Long Beach Island's largest employer with a work force of 300. ■

Source: John Larson, co-owner of Viking Village

A TALE OF TWO BEACH PLANTS: ONE MUST STAY, THE OTHER SHOULD GO

Article and Photos

by Hank Heusinkveld

Tommy Socha, SAW at SAC,
Contributor

Wilmington District marine biologist Doug Piatkowski and Department of the Army intern and Regulatory Specialist Liz Hair began their search for a somewhat elusive plant about a mile west of the Coast Guard station at Wrightsville Beach. In about three hours in sweltering heat they'll cover roughly four miles of the beach looking for a plant that's in danger of becoming extinct. It's called sea beach amaranth, and since 1993 it has been listed as threatened under the provisions of the Endangered



A lone sea beach amaranth grows near the Blockade Runner Hotel at Wrightsville Beach.



Wilmington District Marine Biologist Doug Piatkowski and Regulatory Specialist Liz Hair look for the threatened sea beach amaranth at Wrightsville Beach. (Heusinkveld Photos)

Species Act of 1973. A peculiar, finicky plant that looks similar to spinach, it's threatened by erosion, flooding and regular beach foot traffic. When they find the plant they'll use a GPS device to record its exact location for use in maps that document the amaranth's distribution in coastal North Carolina. Piatkowski soon spots a lone plant.

"Sea beach amaranth is considered a pioneer species and usually grows between the seaward toe of the primary dune and the limit of the wave up-rush zone" he said. "You don't usually find the plant back in the dune field among other coastal dune plants. Their pres-

ence is most dominant on accreting shorelines and germination occurs within stable fore-dune and/or embryo dune formations."

Piatkowski explained that although the amaranth is resilient to the conditions of the harsh beach-face environment, it doesn't particularly build and stabilize dunes like other coastal dune building plants such as native sea oats. Though there are no known dependent links between sea beach amaranth and other species, it is unknown what the consequences would be if the amaranth becomes extinct.

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PLANTS CON'T

According to a statement by the Fish and Wildlife Service, sea beach amaranth is protected because “the reduction of biodiversity reduces the ecological integrity of the environment. All living organisms perform a function in the environment and are dependent on the functions of other organisms. In turn, there is interconnectedness among species including humans in the environment.”

Just past the lone, endangered amaranth is an overabundant, inva-

sive plant species called beach vitex that could potentially impact amaranth and its habitat. Hair uproots a four-foot section of a vitex plant. Its roots are shallow and add nothing to natural dune stabilization. Tommy Socha, a plant specialist with SAW based at the Charleston District, has observed the growth of the vitex over the years. Once thought to help protect and build front beach sand dunes, it had what seemed to be the perfect prerequisites; drought resistant, tolerant of salt and blowing sand, and fast growing. Such a plant was found in Korea and made its way to the eastern coasts of the U.S. where it's now wreaking havoc. Socha joined the South Carolina Exotic Plant Council and brought beach vitex to their attention. He suggested a study be done to see if this plant should be placed on the noxious plant list, or somehow keep it from being planted on the beach. He was concerned about its growth because it had taken over and created a monoculture (a community of only one plant) by shading out native vegetation.

Also known as chaste-



Doug Piatkowski logs in an amaranth location on a GPS device. All data is forwarded to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

berry, kolokolo kahakai, or monk's pepper, beach vitex typically grows up to eight feet in diameter and from six inches to two feet tall. It can reach four feet tall and 12 feet wide when protected from wind and salt spray. Socha said that beach vitex appears to be taking over primary beach dunes in South Carolina. It has been described in news articles as the "kudzu of the coast." Major efforts are underway to document the occurrence and spread of beach vitex to increase public awareness of its potential invasiveness, and to explore methods of control while restoring native beach dune. ■



Liz Hair holds a portion of beach vitex. Its root system is shallow and adds nothing to beach stability. It also tends to shade out native plants like the amaranth.

FREEMAN WINS WOMEN OF COLOR NATIONAL TECHNOLOGY AWARD

Oweita Freeman likes a challenge, keeping up with technology, and she gets great satisfaction from helping people in her community. She has more than 25 years experience in preparing specifications and solicitations for construction and maintenance contracts that include dredging, heavy equipment, highway and building projects. It's her drive and love of her job that earned her a Women of Color National Technology Award.

"My job changes every 30 minutes!" she said. "Basically I'm responsible for ensuring that the latest laws and regulations are incorporated into our solicitations contracts. I deal with projects from \$100,000 on up to millions of dollars for bigger projects. I make sure the technical and special supplemental clauses are incorporated for each specific job. I also ensure that the projects are uploaded into a new website through the Department of Homeland Security and released according to regulations once the project is together."

In a citation for the award South Atlantic Division Command BG Joseph Schroedel lauded Freeman: "She has been innovative throughout

her career, instrumental in implementing improvements to business processes and an essential member of the engineering team. Her ability to quickly adapt to and master new software systems facilitated the Wilmington District being the first Corps District to implement SPEC-SINTACT, the automated system for specification preparation. She provides excellent performance serving on numerous project delivery teams, the most notable are the \$500 million 96-Act Wilmington harbor Project and the \$65 million Roanoke River Flood Reduction Project."

In addition to her work on the job she also was recognized for activities she does to help her community.

"I volunteer with the Salvation Army, and I was involved with the meals on Wheels program. I really enjoyed that because sometimes you're the only person that an elderly person gets to see all day, and they just want a little bit of company. I also was a mentor at Lakeside High School."

Freeman is one who believes that if you work hard you'll reap many benefits, both professionally and spiritually. Her career began in the Wilmington District at entry level,



Oweita Freeman

and she continues to push her way to the top.

"When I came into the Corps of Engineers you had to take what was called the Civil Service Exam. After I took it I had three interviews on the same day. Two were with the Corps of Engineers and one with Social Security. I took the job with the Corps working with the Service Section unit. I think the Lord led me in the right direction, because I enjoy what I'm doing. There's always something new to learn. I came in as a worker trainee, GS-1. I love what I do." ■

TWO YEARS AFTER KATRINA **ST. BERNARD PARISH CANAL CLEANOUT MUCKY, BUT CRITICAL**

**By Tom Clarkson, Public Affairs,
Louisiana Recovery Field Office**

Mud, sludge, muck and more. Add to that tons of slushy mire and sediment, miles of marsh grass, tree debris, construction material, and household trash and you've a highly ineffective flood canal.

As yet another of the myriad of projects undertaken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Louisiana Recovery Field Office, nineteen miles of flood control canals in St. Bernard Parish are being cleaned out. When complete, it is estimated that 81,000 cubic yards will have been pulled out of these two main canals

to improve storm drainage.

Waukegan, Ill., resident, Shawn McGinty, with 33 years of federal government experience, has spent the last six months handling special projects such as this in New Orleans. He came to the Crescent City from the Corp's Chicago District where his regular job is that of construction representative.

"We pull out lawn chairs, household trash cans, old tires and all manner of rubbish and remains," he explains. "But," he continues, "when we're done – in about two weeks – these canals will effectively flow to and through their pump stations."

He stops to check that he crew is proceeding correctly with their exacting work and explains, "One of our biggest challenges is ensuring that we maintain the proper grade and specific, necessary depth along these waterways."

The vehicle his team is so effectively employing that day is interesting looking. It is a large diesel powered tractor with an extension arm of nearly 75 feet stretching out to the front, with large, heavy counter weights behind. The ponderous machine slowly sluices along the canal on tracks mounted upon pontoons.

"These canals have been here since the parish populous started to build in this area and are an important aspect of flood control, so this team takes their work very seriously," says McGinty.

He turns and watches as the hoe scoops up another bucket of slimy silt, water slithering through its dirty, steel teeth, and says, almost to himself, "This really is important and necessary flood control work." ■

For more information about the recovery operations of the Corps' Louisiana Recovery Field Office as part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency response, visit

www.faceofthecorps.com



Getting down and dirty. Tons of muck is still being taken out of canals like this.

WEBSITE HIGHLIGHTS

WITH BARBARA EKELUND

Being in the midst of hurricane season and having emergencies in mind, here is a site from Hungary, available in English too, that pinpoints REAL-TIME disasters around the world. The Havaría Information Service AlertMap (<http://hisz.rsos.hu/alertmap/index.php>) tracks all sorts of disasters, from major forest fires, hurricanes, earthquakes, volcano eruptions, biohazards, epidemics, you name it! If you scroll to the bottom of the page you'll see that the information sources used are reliable national and international agencies.

As our kids are heading back to school now, homework help may be useful.

A meta-homework site from Information Please (the almanac guys) is www.factmonster.com.

Resources for grades 1 to 8 include the Homework Center, Timelines, Almanac, Atlas, Dictionary and Encyclopedia. Fun games and puzzles are here too!

Another metasite called CyberSleuth Kids (<http://cybersleuth-kids.com>) is an age appropriate "internet search guide for grades K-12." Think of it as a kids version of Yahoo. I like the clipart collections that could be used for school projects.

HomeworkSpot
(www.homeworkspot.com)

has subject help specific to elementary, middle and high school students by subject (English, social studies, science, etc.). For example, if your high schooler needs help with science, the directory on the left of the home page will lead to a listing of general sites, specific science topics (bio, chem., physics, etc.), quick references and fun links.

Just for fun, check out "This day in music history," from *Billboard* magazine: <http://www.billboard.com/bbcom/thisday/index.jsp>. Could be a blast from the past! ■

PASTOR BILL

A SUMMER SYMPHONY

Every season of the year has its unique nighttime sounds, but my favorite time for listening to the outdoor music is late summer. The warm humid nights of summer bring scores of insects and frogs onto the soundstage, especially after a good soaking rain. Each sings its own special song to attract potential mates or announce its presence to competitors.



Bill Adams

An evening walk will put you in the presence of such a variety of songs that it seems impossible to distinguish what species have joined in. It is much like an orchestra tuning up. If you listen hard, you will begin to discern the members – many kinds of crickets and katydids, frogs, toads, even an occasional owl or a clicking noise from beetle larvae buried within a tree. Go outside after dark to just listen. Try to discern the singers. You may not know what they are, but if you pay close attention, you will begin to hear some differ-

ences.

The greater angle-winged katydid is one of my favorite singers, not because of its beauty but because of its distinctive sound. This katydid has two songs, one a “lisping” song and the other a “ticking” song. While both are distinctive, the ticking song is fairly easy to pick out. To hear it, go to <http://buzz.ifas.ufl.edu/031a.htm>, scroll to the middle of the page and click on the “ticking” song icon. Listen to it several times and then walk around your neighborhood and listen for it.

I hear it most frequently on cooler nights but I’m frequently surprised on warmer nights. If your neighborhood is like mine, you’ll hear just a few singing, not the overwhelming chorus produced by the more musical species. And as you walk night after



Greater angle-winged katydid. (Photo by Nicky Davis)

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SYMPHONY CON'T

night, you'll learn to expect them at certain locations and they will become like welcome friends.

At this time of year some migrating songbirds can also be heard overhead flying southward at night (no, its not to soon). They sing out gentle call notes (peeps) to one another as they move southward. I love to hear those notes because they tell me that nature is on the move; that even though I haven't noticed it yet the season is already changing. When I feel that summer is endless, I have but to go outside and listen for the gentle "peeps" overhead to hear the announcement of its coming demise. These drifting call notes will grow more common as the autumn advances, especially after the passage of cold fronts.

Amid the confusion of noise we hear outside, how can we ever learn to distinguish individual animal sounds? Some

people are amazed that it can be done, but then they are not amazed at all that they can recognize the voices of family members or co-workers out of sight in the next room. How is that done? We humans have a great power of auditory discernment and we use it for things that are important to us. We use it every day in our dealings with other people; that we do not use it in our dealings with nature is our loss - for God has created a most wonderful symphony of sounds, a symphony with movements that change with the seasons.

I've found that discovering God's truth for my life is frequently like trying to discern a single cricket call on a summer night. Like those sounds, our society keeps informing me of the many diverse things it deems important – money, power, insurance, politics, fame, cars, sports, beer, E.D. treatments, and so on. The clamor of things vying for my

attention is endless. The messages are simple - if I just invest more wisely, buy this car, eat this food, vote for this candidate, watch this show, or ask my doctor about this drug, I can be happy!

But I know these messages are just the background noise of life in our world. Happiness is not that easy. None of these things offers what I really need to find peace and contentment in life. No - to have peace in my life I need to shut out all the noise that society generates and learn to discern the One Voice - like I have for the greater angle-winged katydid. I need that One Voice that speaks of things eternal and tells me what my priorities should really be, for only when my priorities are right will I truly be happy. So I turn off the TV and take a walk outside to hear the symphony. That voice is there but I must make the effort and take the time to hear it. ■